



2 towns added to contamination study

By SARAH GREENBLATT
STAFF WRITER

A federal study of contamination at a South Plainfield site has been widened to include waterways in portions of Piscataway and Middlesex.

PISCATAWAY

With the Hamilton Industrial Park in South Plainfield slated to be placed on the National Priorities List for long-term cleanup, the federal Environmental Protection Agency has broadened its search for polychlorinated biphenyls that may have been carried from the site by the Bound Brook.

After finding contaminated carp, bass, and sunfish living in the Bound Brook and New Market Pond in June, the EPA took further tests last month of fish taken from the Green Brook in Middlesex, Spring Lake in South Plainfield and a section of the Bound Brook downstream of New Market Pond.

Dredge materials removed from New Market Pond some eight to 10

years ago may also be tested as part of the ongoing EPA investigation, which began after the agency found high levels of PCBs in soil samples and the interiors of several businesses in the Hamilton Industrial Park in South Plainfield.

Now owned by D.S.C. of Newark Enterprises, the 25-acre site had been owned and operated from 1936 to 1962 by Cornell-Dubilier Electronics, which manufactured electrical components.

The site is crossed by the Bound Brook, which flows westward into New Market Pond and the Green Brook.

Dredge materials from the pond were distributed widely after the township removed them from the pond to provide flood relief, said Piscataway Environmental Commission Chairman Ralph Magliette.

Some of the materials may still be in the park adjacent to New Market Pond, while portions of the dredge spoils were sold or given to builders, who may have used them as landfill in wetland areas, Magliette said.

"It's a very insidious problem," Magliette said. "The town was just giving the dredge material away. People were putting it in their gardens. We don't know who all used it."

Mark Ettere, one of a half-dozen township residents who attended a meeting sponsored by the EPA yesterday concerning the study, concurred.

"That stuff is all over town," he said.

EPA site coordinator Eric Wilson said he will begin working with township officials this week to identify the sites where dredge spoils may be located.

Wilson said the agency is likely to do a limited sampling of materials, adding that it may not be possible to study dredge spoils that may have been dispersed to far-flung locations.

The findings of hazardous levels of PCBs in fish samples prompted the state Department of Environmental Protection to issue an advisory last month against eating fish caught in the pond or brook.

While federal guidelines allow 2 parts per million of PCBs in fish, the study found levels as high as 36 ppm in some carp.

Although results of the fish study are not expected until late this month, the DEP issued an interim advisory that covers the full length of the Bound Brook.

Should the results reveal high levels of contamination in fish sampled from greater distances from the industrial park, the DEP may extend the advisory to other areas, said agency biologist Bruce Ruppel.

The EPA is in the process of identifying all parties that may be responsible for the contamination, said Peter Mannino, who is coordinating cleanup of the site.

The agency will negotiate with the responsible parties to ensure that the site is cleaned up, Mannino said.

If the site is placed on the National Priorities List this month as expected, federal funds should become available to begin a long-term cleanup soon, Mannino said.